

heart of all these errors lies Berger's argument—again, uncritically following his sources—that “Everything we did was being shaped by what was happening in Vietnam or in the Black Power movement” (quoting Donna Wilmott, on page 281, but a continual theme throughout). In reality, in the late 1960s, black and Third World liberation struggles *did* shape events and world culture as they had never done before, or since. But these struggles were not and could not have been more than one side of a contradiction. The other side of that contradiction in the United States was the power of white supremacy. And white supremacy shaped the whole of white society, the lives and consciousness of white radicals included. The young white people who organized and joined Weatherman were not blank slates responding to the external stimuli of black and Third World revolution. They were young people who had been raised in a society that for hundreds of years had privileged white over black, men over women, and the United States over the rest of the world. If we want to understand how it was that these young white people were able so easily to write off a Fred Hampton, or so self-confidently destroy SDS, trying to understand how white supremacy shaped these young people would be a fine place to start. Weatherman never made the kind of effort it needed to understand this simple reality. In *Outlaws of America*, despite the pleasing narrative he offers, Dan Berger has not yet made that effort either, and the goals he sets for himself are compromised by that failing.

(In the interests of full disclosure, I have a book being published in Fall 2007 by the Press of the University of Mississippi, *A Hard Rain Fell: SDS and Why it Failed*, in which I deal with Weatherman and other SDS factions. I am also an SDS veteran and was briefly associated with Weatherman.)

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Alan Sica and Stephen Turner, eds., *The Disobedient Generation: Social Theorists in the Sixties* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

This book presents essays by nineteen accomplished and prominent sociologists, from the US and other countries, which attempt to account for their development as professionals and academicians in the context of what the editors believe are historically specific cohort-shaping experiences. In effect, the authors are asked to answer a question to which few of us are normally prepared to respond and to provide personally relevant information (beyond the simple facts of personal contacts, dates, encounters, schools attended, and the like) which is normally beyond first person explanation and for which the principles of selection are not and probably cannot be made clear. On the other hand, there is enough which is disarmingly

off-hand in the willingness of most of the writers to assume a shared reality with their readers (the sixties). Because so many of the essays correspond to the sort of allegorical narrative that journalists call 'human interest stories', most of these readers will find something to enjoy. This is certainly not without value, but it is not what the editors seem to have intended.

The problem is that the book promises far more than it delivers, and what it delivers has little to do with the project envisioned by its editors. In this respect, it is a failure, at least if judged by the editors' description of their intention. On the other hand, like many failures this is not without benefit, since it suggests that the problem lies in the project itself and not merely in the fact that it is in no sense realized. That is, its failure allows us to rethink the presuppositions under which the editors framed their project, and, more generally to consider whether or not this approach to the history of sociology is intellectually worthwhile. The reason I say this is that if the editors' intention is to shed light, as they say, on the relationship between experience and theory, one must conclude either that the authors were poorly instructed or that it is not possible to provide an account adequate to such a project. I believe that the book demonstrates that the project is at fault, not the authors. If I am correct, the failure provides a good reason for thinking rather differently about how to write a history of sociology which can illuminate the pragmatics of theory construction; and it provides an equally good reason for thinking seriously about what problems would have to be addressed before one could even begin discussing the possible influences of experience on theoretical dispositions. It goes without saying that there are readers who would prefer to persist in the sort of project represented by this book, but they will find only weak support here. In what follows, I will use quotation marks to indicate that 'the sixties' is for this book a virtually undelineated construct. Sica's introduction purports to establish what 1968 has 'come to mean', but it is not consistent in that respect with most of the succeeding chapters and so, despite the fact that it offers a sympathetic take on aspects of the period, it doesn't quite fit the material which is supposed to realize the project.

The editors introduce the collection by describing their overall intention, which is to help readers learn "about the private mechanisms that give rise to creative endeavors" (ix). Specifically, it is aimed at clarifying the ways in which 'the sixties' and its immediate aftermath influenced a group of accomplished and prominent academic sociologists. This way of describing the project relies on an essentialist definition of the period at odds with the possibility of fitting what is thereby fixed to what must be considered fluid ('life experience' presumably including retrospection). As a result, the authors are asked to do what the very nature of the project prevents them from doing, namely take a stance toward something which is, for each of them, impossibly definite and total. They are asked, then, to situate themselves within that impossible circumstance, and to provide a personal account which can be reasonably interpreted by readers as bearing

on the relationship between 'life experience' and theory, itself conceived of by what is dangerously close to an essentialist model. Moreover, the limits the editors placed on their selection gives sociology itself an essence (tied to something called 'the classical tradition'), in my mind most notable for what it excludes and not for what it includes.

The book attempts to provide support for several hypotheses: 1) that 'the sixties' established parameters for the intellectual development of a specific cohort (born between 1944 and 1951); 2) that the effects of these are evident in both their work and their methods of accounting for themselves, as it were, autobiographically; 3) that the ties to the "classical tradition of social theory and sociology" is due not so much to their academic training as to their capacity to resist "the passing enthusiasms of the past fifteen years, from rational choice theory at one end to transgender theories at the other" (xii); 4) that "life experiences at critical moments helped define and determine ultimate scholarly aspirations and achievements" (xiii); and 5) that the collection offers to return "the corpus of social theory to its homeland in the larger sociological tradition" (xiii).

The fifth hypothesis is tautological since, the editors tell us, the authors were selected according to their ties to the 'classical tradition', which also accounts for why so many of them are not known specifically for their theoretical work. That is, the exclusion of those whom the editors believe are caught up in "passing enthusiasms" means that the absence of representatives of other philosophically informed theories is a matter of principle, and it is at least arguable that some of those "enthusiasms" are part of what is most vital in theory today. In any case, the bias in the selection begs the most general question of the relationship between life experience and theoretical work. It is perhaps unfair to complain about omissions since no such collection can avoid the limitations of selection. But it seems to me that at least some of what was omitted has to do with where theory seems to be going today, and with better philosophical reason than is implied by reference to "passing enthusiasms." The few authors whose writings do not straightforwardly fit under the umbrella of the 'classical tradition', for example, the essays by Steve Woolgar and K. Knorr-Cetina, do not reflect on the relationship between their work and the sixties in any way designed to address the editors' hypotheses, though Cetina's discussion of some paradoxes of the period is helpful in thinking about how it is typically represented.

It is notable, given the confidence in the project expressed in the preface and introduction, that many of the authors began by raising questions about the viability of writing autobiographically in regard to those claims. On the other hand, most at least gave it a shot, as if the problems are not as important as they seem to have thought. Paolo Jedlowski, for example, begins one of the most provocative essays with what might initially appear to be a strikingly theoretical statement which probably ought to have been engaged in the preface: "autobiography is a suspect genre" (141). Quite a few others seem to agree with his confession that "I

have difficulty in saying clearly what binds me to those years" (142). Yet he continues as if the difficulty poses no serious obstacle to continuing in an autobiographical vein.

Two authors easily identified as American theoreticians, Jeffrey Alexander and Craig Calhoun, wrote what for me were disappointing essays. Alexander chose an unreachably elevated register in which to characterize the period and its possible effects. Consequently, he never comes close to the pragmatics of theory; in particular, he provides little information relevant to how he goes about addressing conceptual ambiguities in the course of constructing theory such that one might begin to get a glimmer of how his theorizing might have been related to his experience. Calhoun's prose is admirable written but his essay provides little to suggest a complex enough connection between the sixties and his theoretical work (or to the idea of theory) to allow one to place it within the editors' project. The difficulty so many of the writers apparently had in identifying with the project occasionally produced results that seemed hostile to it. Several took so radically ironical a stance toward the sixties that it is difficult to read their essays without seeing them as expressing bitterness or indifference to the very idea of linking their work to the period. Several essays, perhaps for similar reasons, were overly didactic and, in that respect, were simply not responsive to the question the book was intended to address.

The two essays which were, for me, most interesting and inspiring were by Michael Burawoy and Saskia Sassen. Both provided the sort of autobiographical information that either comes from an extraordinary memory or a terrific file system. Burawoy wrote about academic, political, and theoretical influences during the long period of his development as a professional sociologist, and, though his choice of discipline was almost by default, one gets the feeling that the level of commitment to the political realities he faced was in no small way part of that development. To that extent, he at least shows what might have been done more generally to shed light on how some people come to accept sociology as a calling, not to mention on the pragmatics of theory, had the book's project been framed less ambitiously and, I should add, more sensitive to its own theoretical status. Sassen's chapter, which I found the most gripping, both in its prose and its content, depicts her rich experience as an activist, a performer, a lover, and a participant in geo-politics; and it recounts some of her adventures in negotiating the terms of her career in an occasionally unfriendly academic environment. But even in this case, the essay speaks to an altogether different relationship between career and extra-curricular life from what is projected by the editors.

If the book is disappointing, both in the failure of its project and the unevenness of the essays, there are still good reasons to buy it—for several excellent essays, for the different ways in which the history of recent sociology is represented by different writers of note according to their mentors, the places they found themselves in or chose during their careers, and for evidence that there

remain no plausible accounts of whatever “the sixties” names and no agreement on what it means. In these respects the book is a symptomatic document, not even an approximate realization of an idea about the historiography of sociology; and it is only as such a document that I recommend it.

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Xiaolan Bao, *Holding Up More Than Half the Sky: Chinese Women Garment Workers in New York City, 1948–92* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006).

Moon-Kie Jung, *Reworking Race: The Making of Hawaii’s Interracial Labor Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

Moon-Kie Jung’s *Reworking Race* and Xiaolan Bao’s *Holding Up More Than Half the Sky* exemplify the fruitfulness of recent scholarship on Asian Americans. Characteristic of such recent scholarship, the two studies demonstrate both theoretical innovation and investigative rigor in research. By placing their experiences in larger historical contexts, the two books not only deepen our understanding of Asian Americans but also shed new light on broad critical issues, especially race and class. For many, race and class are two of the most perplexing issues in American history in general and in labour history in particular. Many have viewed them as two competing and mutually exclusive consciousnesses. Therefore, the perceived lack of working class consciousness, a focal point in the long-lasting debate over the notion of American exceptionalism, has widely been seen as attributable to the influence of racial consciousness.

In *Reworking Race*, Moon-Kie Jung offers refreshing insights into the intersection of race and class in the context of the development of the interracial labour movement in Hawaii during the middle decades of the twentieth century. In chapter two, he chronicles the emergence and organization of highly centralized and concentrated capital in the hands of a few corporations, controlled by a haole (non-Iberian white) oligarchy. Its unyielding and vigorous antiunionism prepared one of the conditions under which workers of multiracial backgrounds became conscious of their common interest. Chapter three discusses the arrival of a racially diverse labour force, its stratification, and the racial divisions in it. The remaining chapters, chapters four through five, cover developments that eventually led to the formation of a successful interracial labour movement in the post-war years.

Measured by the growth of the International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union (ILWU), a focus of Jung’s discussions, the labour movement’s success is remarkable, indeed. As Jung notes, “Its estimated membership of 900 frozen and declining from the beginning of the war to the end of martial law in